

Integrative Balance Psychotherapy & Wellness Coaching

- Kava Info Sheet -

Note: Always research supplements (including potential risks and contraindications) before use. Always discuss supplements with your physician before use.

What is Kava (Piper Methysticum)?

Kava is a plant that typically grows in the Pacific Islands. It is essentially the plant-world's equivalent of a benzodiazepine—producing sedative effects. It can be acquired in a variety of formats, including herb, capsule, or tincture. I typically recommend tinctures as an effective form of herbal consumption. I do not recommend daily use of this supplement; it is best taken sparingly when high-level anxiety and/or panic attacks are occurring.

Recommended Dosage:

400-700 mg, as needed (no more than 250 mg of kavalactones in one day)

Indicated For:

Anxiety, stress, insomnia, muscle cramps and strains, irritability, menopause related hot flashes, topical anesthetic

Warnings and Contraindications:

There have been some concerns about the safety of kava root, particularly its role in causing liver toxicity. Some people who have consumed kava developed liver damage but the reason is unclear. What seems to be generally agreed upon is that if one is to consume kava, the person should ensure it is a standardized preparation made only from the kava root, and not to ingest high quantities over a long period of time. Daily use should be avoided.

Its use is not recommended during pregnancy, while breast-feeding, or during early childhood.

When kava kava is used with both prescription and non-prescription drugs that promote sleepiness, the effects of the drug may be exaggerated, resulting in sedation or mental impairment. Kava kava may cause excessive sedation if it is taken with other potentially sedating herbs such as: Catnip, Hops, Kava, St. John's Wort and Valerian.

Kava kava should not be taken with alcohol.

Because of the mild euphoric feeling that kava can induce, it is sometimes considered to be potentially addictive. It may become less effective with extended use.

Discontinue use if any of the following symptoms develop: increased shortness of breath; yellowing of skin, hair, or nails; scaly rash; and/or puffiness in the face.